

PRESENTATION TO THE BOARD OF HEALTH
NOVEMBER 28, 2011
ON

8.1.2

THE FEASIBILITY OF IMPLEMENTING A MODEL PROGRAM FOR NUTRITIOUS FOOD
REPORT (BOH11028/110820).

My name is Maureen Leyland and I am speaking on behalf of the *Social Action Committee, Ontario Association of Social Workers, Hamilton Branch*. We wish to address the recommendation emanating from the Report on the Feasibility of Implementing a Model Program for Nutritious Food. The report recommends a program to provide monthly \$20 gift certificates for shopping at a farmer's market to single unattached individuals on *Ontario Works* to enable them to buy fresh fruit and vegetables.

We wish to express our appreciation to the Board of Health and staff for their support and the studies carried out by staff which details the consequences of a lack of nutrients to ensure a healthy diet and overall well being. Given that the Ontario Provincial Government reneged on their commitment to reduce child poverty by 25% in five years, and are not prepared to implement immediate remedies for urgent needs such as nutritious food, we are encouraged to see that this proposal indicates that the City of Hamilton is taking responsibility to meet the nutrition and hunger needs of a group of impoverished people on social assistance i.e. single unattached individuals.

There is ample evidence to show that a nutritious diet is a basic requirement for health and well being. It has been demonstrated many times that people need adequate incomes to allow them to buy nutritious food if they are to reduce their risk of health problems, limit nutrient deficiencies and decrease their incidence of obesity. The connection between poverty and ill health is perfectly clear. As the report shows people on Ontario Works receive \$115 less than they need for adequate food.

We see two drawbacks to this recommendation:

- A \$20 gift certificate is not enough for two reasons. The study advises that this \$20 will allow an individual to eat five servings of vegetables for two weeks. So how do they get their daily intake of nutrients for the rest of the month? Obviously, this regimen fails to meet a consistent pattern of consumption to maintain levels of the necessary protein, minerals and vitamins for the rest of each month and does not meet the standards of the Canadian Food Guide. The Canadian Food Guide recommends the daily intake for adult females and males as follows: females need 7-8 servings and males need 8-10 servings **every day** for foods like fruit and vegetables.
- The Canadian Food Guide also recommends the inclusion of products such as meat, chicken and fish in a daily diet. Specifically, the guide recommends two servings of these foods to adult women and three servings to adult men on a daily basis. A \$20 gift certificate is inadequate to purchase foods which will provide the necessary nutrients of protein, minerals and vitamins.
- The second drawback is one of accessibility. Many farmers' markets are not open in the winter. Yes, the downtown Farmer's Market is open all year round but many individuals live too far away to access it. Hamilton incorporates far flung neighbourhoods like Stoney Creek and Hamilton Mountain, Hamilton East, Dundas and Flamborough. Travel